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Intelligence Information Report

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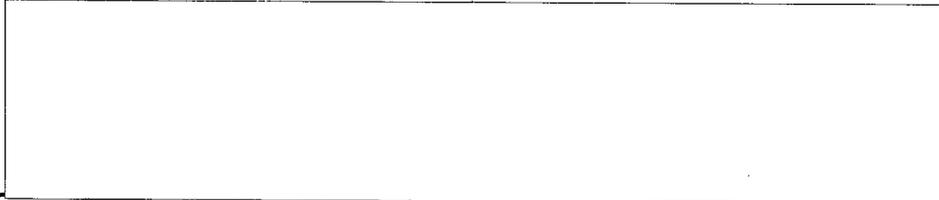
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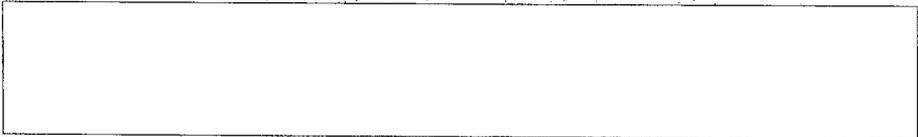
COUNTRY

Poland/NATO

SUBJECT

Warsaw Pact Perceptions of NATO Strengths and Weaknesses (DOI: Late 1981)

SOURCE



(Summary: NATO is seen as a loose, weak association of nations which lacks a firm commitment to defend central Europe. Warsaw Pact planners perceive particular political and military weakness on the flank of NATO. Militarily, the strategic forces of the United States, United Kingdom and France generally are highly regarded, while NATO General Purpose Ground Forces are deemed inadequate. NATO's primary strengths are qualitative, and lie principally in its strategic forces, tactical air forces, radio-electronic systems, antitank weapons and some air defense systems. NATO's major military weaknesses are the huge imbalance in ground forces, the long supply lines from the United States, the limited territory available to NATO on the European continent, a slow mobilization system, and the lack of an in-being command, control and communications system for directing mobilization and a war against the Warsaw Pact.)

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1. NATO is perceived as a weak alliance, with each member state having varying interests and goals. (Source Comment: Such a perception invites trouble

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by tempting Warsaw Pact(WP) action.) The United States carries the main burden for the defense of Europe, with almost all West European nations failing to carry their share of the load. The singular exception is West Germany which, because of its military traditions and strategic location in central Europe, takes its NATO defense responsibilities very seriously. NATO has a significant lead over the WP in technological developments, and this lead becomes very apparent whenever equipment comparisons are made. (Source Comment: It is ironic and comical that the United States offers the best weapons and equipment to NATO--Pershing II, for example--yet the European NATO countries are not receptive. In the WP the USSR offers old, obsolescent weapons and equipment to its WP allies, and they are accepted.) NATO commands little respect in WP military circles; the only serious threat is perceived to be posed by the strategic forces--missiles, bombers, missile-carrying nuclear submarines and aircraft carriers--of the United States (and, to a lesser extent of the United Kingdom and France).

2. NATO's flanks are viewed as particularly vulnerable, both politically and militarily. In the south, WP leaders see Greece, Turkey and Italy as weak and unreliable NATO partners. On NATO's northern flank, Norway is totally unprepared, and Denmark's "embarrassingly weak military posture" exposes the northern flank of NATO's central region to potential catastrophe. (Source Comment: The Danes cannot count on the shallow "Gulf of Mecklenburg" to save them. If the tides are right, WP tanks and armored vehicles can cross the gulf without major difficulties.)

3. France is considered in a special context by WP strategists. France's exit from NATO in the 1960s was viewed as a dramatic weakening of the alliance. (Source Comment: Polish leaders at the time also considered France's departure from NATO as a tactic designed to instigate similar moves by WP member states--Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary in particular.) Over the years, French leaders gradually have brought France back into close alignment with NATO, and WP military planners now feel that France will support NATO fully in a war against the WP in central Europe. In fact, WP planners expect that France will commit forces to NATO's immediate defense in West Germany, not waiting for French territory to be violated.

4. French strategic forces are highly regarded in Warsaw Pact circles, as are all of France's naval and air forces. The nuclear elements of France's naval and air forces, while viewed with special respect, are deemed vulnerable to WP propaganda in both peacetime and wartime.

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The French army is seen as poorly organized, trained and equipped, and the tactical air defense forces are described as "very poor." (Source Comment: France unquestionably has much more industrial potential--and many more inhabitants--than Poland, yet Poland's ground forces are better and the tactical air defense elements are about equal in capabilities.)

5. NATO Strengths:

--Nuclear Forces. NATO's clearest qualitative and quantitative advantage is in its nuclear forces. (Source Comment: These forces currently represent NATO's only hope for deterrence or military victory.)

-Tactical Air Forces. NATO air forces clearly are outnumbered; however, NATO aircraft have greater range, and feature far more sophisticated electronics and weapons systems than their WP adversaries. NATO also enjoys a "huge" equipment and doctrinal advantage in providing and controlling air support for ground forces. (Source Comment: At present, the only close air support which Polish divisions can count upon receiving in combat will be provided by organic helicopter assets.)

-Naval Forces. The WP clearly has many more naval craft than NATO; however, many of the WP's ships are older and less efficient. Except in the category of small, missile-equipped patrol craft, NATO holds a decisive technological edge.

-Antitank Weapons Systems. NATO enjoys a current qualitative lead in both air and ground antitank systems, and this margin is expected to increase as new or improved Western systems are produced and deployed in greater numbers. WP commanders are particularly impressed by (and fearful of) the reported effectiveness of A-10 aircraft and a future antitank system known to the WP as "Tank Breaker" or "Assault Breaker."

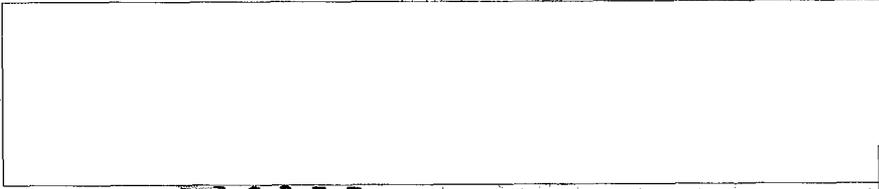
-Tactical Antiaircraft Systems (Missiles and Artillery). NATO's edge in this area is qualitative, and is very tenuous. The WP is working hard to overcome the West's technological advantage.

-Radio-Electronic Systems. NATO is seen as clearly superior technologically in the following areas:

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- communications, command and control
- missile guidance and targeting
- electronic countermeasures.

6. NATO Weaknesses:

-Ground Forces. NATO's greatest weakness is the existing imbalance in ground forces, particularly in tank and armored forces. (Source Comment: The British Army of the Rhine is viewed as a particular joke--inadequately trained and equipped, and an embarrassment for NATO.)

-Supply Lines. The long supply lines from the United States are extremely vulnerable to interdiction, and disruption of these lines is one of the highest-priority wartime missions assigned to Soviet surface and submarine units in the Atlantic. Such tasks are stressed in WP exercises and operational war planning.

-Territorial Limitations. The relatively short distances from the East-West border to the English Channel and Atlantic Ocean make it impossible for NATO to trade space for time against a WP offensive, and severely restrict NATO's ability to build any defensive mobilization/support base on the European continent. (Source Comment: This can be a "fatal weakness.")

-Command, Control and Communications System. NATO appears to lack an in-place command, control and communications system with which to organize and direct mobilization or a war in central Europe. WP planners feel that NATO is an "epoch" behind in this area.

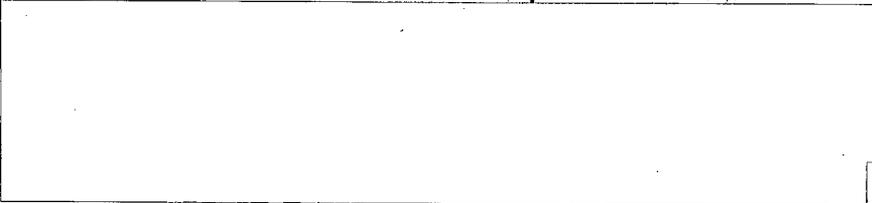
-Mobilization System. The mobilization systems of the NATO nations vary widely in efficiency, but the overall trend is toward improvement. West Germany's system is viewed as particularly threatening to the WP, and is watched carefully; Polish intelligence analysts were convinced that West Germany could field 155-160 additional combat divisions in a relatively short period of time. Despite NATO improvements, however, WP planners believe that NATO's system is inadequate. Given the territorial (space) limitations, it is considered unlikely that NATO will have the luxury of a lengthy (30-day) mobilization period. (Source Comment: WP forces plan to be on the Rhine River within 6-8 days, in Paris within 15 days, and to have overrun the Iberian Peninsula within 30 days.)

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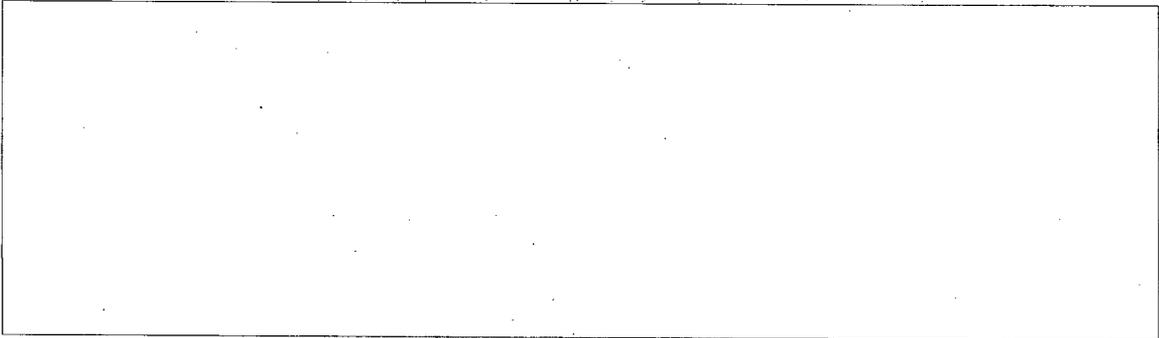


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